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Splurge on a Budget at Shangri-la

If one 5-star hotel is making serious attempts to woo the wine drinkers, it has to be Shangri-la in Delhi. Not only it has some good prices on the list, its wine-by-the-glass policy offering 32 labels available for as low a quantity as 50mL, making it a wine lover's delight. What is further commendable is that the 50mL glass costs exactly 1/15 of a regular bottle, so you don't feel cheated on price. **With an Enomatic machine that can keep open bottles fresh for 28 days, you need not worry about wine being off - unless it was so before the bottle was uncorked.**

The complimentary, unlimited munchies they serve with wine are also uncommon and beckon you for more wine. 19 Oriental Avenue is the most conducive place for a wine tasting party, preferably near the Enomatic area. I was told the same wine list is valid throughout the hotel.

I suggest starting with a glass of VCP Brut (Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin-yellow label) Champagne. Though priced at Rs.3500 a bottle, a tulip-shaped glass costs only Rs.450- quite a deal. I would even recommend stopping by for a glass of this delicious bubbly all frothed up to replace the staple Moet Hennessey as the most visible champagne, before starting any evening out.

Here is my recommended package for splurging on a budget, with one champagne and 8 glasses of still wine in a 5-star deluxe comfort, in the suggested order of tasting:

Wine	Grapes	Region	Country	mL	Rs.
1. Champagne VCP Brut	PNoir, Char, PMeun.	Champagne	France	125*	450
2. Dr. Loosen Bernkastel 2006	Riesling	Mosel	Germany	50	150
3. Villa Maria Private Bin 2006	Sauvignon	Marlborough	N Zealand	125**	320
4. Mt. Pleasant Elizabeth 2002	Semillon	Hunter Valley	Australia	50	150
5. Allegrini Valpolicella Cl. 2006	Corvina, Ronda.,+	Valpolicella	Italy	50	150
6. Bodega Norton	Malbec	Mendoza	Argentina	50	150
7. Grover La Reserve 2005	Shiraz/ Cabernet	Bangalore	India	50	100
8. Casillero Diablo 2004	Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo Valley	Chile	125**	150
9. Coppola Diamond Series	Syrah	Napa, California	USA	50	200
Total			9	675	1820

Champagne (*) is served in the regular tulip-shaped glass, which is appx. 125 mL. Assuming that there are 6 people in your party, the cost of a Casillero Diablo bottle from Concha y Toro costing the lowest anywhere in India-Rs.900 would mean a cost of (**) Rs.150 for a glass of 125 mL. Same goes for the entry level Villa Maria which does project pleasant flavours of a NZ Sauvignon Blanc.

With this package you will end up drinking 675 mL of wine, which is 0.9 bottle- the amount consumed by Delhi Wine Club members at their 3-hour, 5-6 course wine dinners. This amount is recommended to be

consumed, perhaps only once a month. But with wines from 9 countries, giving you the taste of all different grapes, it is unique.

Champagne does add to the cost. But we are talking of splurging, remember? If you are not in a mood to splurge, or do not want to cross the outside level of healthy, daily wine drinking, or if you are less than 5-6 in the group, eliminate the non- 50mL wines from the recommended package and you can sample a healthy 300 mL from 6 countries, all different great varietals, at an affordable Rs.900- within any budget. VAT is extra, of course, a sizable 20%. Fortunately, the hotel charges no service charges.

Shangri-la has recently launched a wine club. At an event I was invited to, I saw no Indians or non-whites besides the sommelier, vendor or me. I need to check up from the hotel if it is only an ex-pat club in which case I cannot write any further about it. It brought in memories of the Beach Candy Club in Mumbai which even in the sixties did not allow Indians to enter its doors!

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I have since been assured that the hotel has no racist policy. The invitees are from the data base of their regular clients. For Rs.1000, one can taste 4-5 wines with a sommelier like Harshal Shah this evening, talking about the wines which were all Pinot Noir, with snacks-editor